

South-East Group

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Glover's Wood SSSI, Nr Charlwood, Surrey (v.-c. 17), 15th October 2006

Glover's Wood is a substantial area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland situated on a thin bed of Weald clay overlaying a ridge of Paludina limestone. The main stream running through the wood cuts through the clay and limestone forming a steep sided valley – the Welland Ghyll. In part of the wood, sandstone overlies the Wealden clay. The central part of the wood is managed as an LNR by the Woodland Trust, and the whole site is an SSSI.

Both primary and secondary woodland are present. In the primary areas the pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and ancient hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* coppice dominate, interspersed with ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, field maple *Acer campestre* and hazel *Corylus avellana*. Small numbers of Wych elm *Ulmus glabra*, small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and the wild service tree *Sorbus terminalis* are all indicative of ancient woodland.

The site was explored by six members, led by Jeff Duckett. The first pond we came to was of little interest but a nearby elder, *Sambucus nigra* showed fruiting *Cryphaea heteromalla*. Following the track round the pond we eventually arrived at the start of the main track west. This area was quite productive with a fruiting *Fossombronina*, subsequently determined as *F. wondsraczeckii*, *Archidium alternifolium*, *Ditrichum cylindricum*, *Dicranella staphylina* and an interesting *Weissia*, unfortunately without capsules.

We crossed the main footpath, working our way north, towards the ghyll. Good woodland species seen included *Cirriphyllum piliferum*, *Homalia trichomanoides*, *Rhytidiadelphus triquetrus* and the unusual *Ctenidium molluscum* var *sylvaticum*. We were able to compare and contrast *Isothecium myosuroides* and *I. alopecuroides* on the tree bases as we reached the ghyll.

The ghyll itself was slightly disappointing although we did find *Conocephalum conicum*, *Lunularia cruciata*, *Pellia endiivifolia* and *P. epiphylla*, the latter much scarcer. *Chiloscyphus polyanthus* was mixed with the *Conocephalum*. Mosses were underrepresented although *Rhynchostegium riparioides* was common as was *Fissidens taxifolius*. We crossed the ghyll, and climbed to the edge of the woodland where we enjoyed our lunch.

After lunch we recrossed the ghyll and followed it south to a bridge and a little beyond, crossing the main track again and cutting back east on a footpath which led us to a boggy pond. The elongated sedge *Carex elongata* occurs here on one of only two sites in Surrey. The mosses were of interest with *Sphagnum squarrosum*, male *Sphagnum palustre*, and a mainly green form of *Sphagnum capillifolium* subsp. *rubellum*. Also present were *Brachythecium rivulare*, *Calliergon cordifolium*, and *Leptodictyon riparium*.

Making our way back towards the reserve entrance we concentrated on epiphytes and woodland liverworts. All three common species of *Calypogeia* were found together with *Frullania dilatata*, Metz-

geria furcata, *M. temperata*, *Microlejeunea ulicina*, *Plagiochila porelloides* and one patch of *Plagiochila asplenioides*. All the common moss epiphytes were recorded and then, on an ash, *Fraxinus excelsior*, Jeff Duckett showed us an unusual *Ulota* species he had found growing with both *U. bruchii* and *U. crispa*. The dry capsule was very pale and pyriform, almost smooth and with a very small opening; a good candidate for **Ulota coarctata*, which Jeff was able to confirm subsequently. This moss was new for Surrey, and almost unrecorded elsewhere in the South East.

This was almost the last find of the day, although a little further on we stopped to admire large stands of almost pure *Rhytidiadelphus loreus*. A total of 87 species (19 liverworts and 68 mosses) were recorded during the day. It was felt that the site would be well worth revisiting later in the season when some of the interesting small and ephemeral species were fruiting, and the Surrey Recorder agreed to do this.

Cackle Street, Ashdown Forest, East Sussex (v.-c. 14), Sunday 26th November 2006

After stormy weather the day before, the day began brighter but with a fresh south-westerly wind, which slowly died down during the course of the field trip. Six of us met in the Hollies car park at TQ461286 in the parish of Maresfield at 10.30am. Howard Wallis (to whom I am very grateful for so speedily compiling the list) had found the journey from Surrey quicker than expected and spent his time whilst awaiting the others exploring an area around a pond to the north and the car park and paths to the west, finding *Bryum dichotomum*, *B. subapiculatum* and *Fossombronina pusilla*. When we were all assembled we headed towards the waterfall in the stream, known to the Sussex Botanical Recording Society as Duddleswell Gorge, although strictly it is a ghyll. Sylvia Priestly knows the area well and had attended a field trip led by

David Streeter of Sussex University some years ago. During this she was shown where *Nardia compressa* grows, in its only extant site in lowland England. En route we briefly explored an area of wet sparse heath – Mat-grass *Nardus stricta* and Cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* with clumps of *Sphagnum* including *S. palustre*, *S. papillosum* and *S. capillifolium*.

Nardia compressa was found growing in the middle of the stream on a hard, partly shaded band of sandstone with *Scapania undulata* close by. This is its only site in south-east England. *Hypnum armoricum* was frequent along the banks. The wet slippery slopes and the age of our party prohibited our exploring the ghyll below the waterfall, but we looked at an area of maturing willow-scrub where the ghyll opens into rush and sedge mire, and there we found shelter from the wind, some dry bracken on convenient seating slopes and took up the suggestion for lunch with enthusiasm. Sylvia then suggested we explore the area known as Spring Gardens, which were not only fun without being too dangerous but had an interesting byoflora, particularly of epiphytes. Of interest was a good population of *Microlejeunea ulicina*, while *Orthotrichum lyellii* was admired for its gemmae and *Ulota bruchii* was a new 10-km square record.

As we walked up the gently sloping hill to the car park, with scenes of apparently endless heath and wild stream valleys, the South Downs silhouetted behind us against a beautiful cloud-studded sky, the golds of autumn colour, and the browns of the heathland, we all felt it had been an enjoyable and productive day.

A total of 16 hepatics and 53 mosses were determined.

Avery's Wood, Near Speldhurst, West Kent (v.-c. 16), 20th January 2007

Avery's Wood lies to the south and west of the village of Speldhurst and is approached across an arable field. The whole area is underlain by hard, Tunbridge Wells sandstone which radiates out in high ridges which have been cut and dissected by tributary streams merging from springs at the junction of the sandstone and softer Wadhurst Clays. Within the valleys, long, narrow ghyll woodlands occur, and Avery's Wood is typical of these.

The excursion was to have been led by Jan Hendy, who had surveyed the site back in 1996, but unfortunately Jan hurt her back and was replaced at short notice by Howard Wallis. Rain had been forecast, but in fact the day turned out fine and there was a good turnout of ten members and non-members.

As soon as we entered the woodland we began recording common species, *Mnium hornum* and *Atrichum undulatum* were growing in close proximity and this gave the more experienced a teaching opportunity, comparing and contrasting two superficially similar species for the newcomers. The path soon divided and we took the right hand path over a small footbridge. The ghyll stream was running full and fast, and this was to make searching the banks difficult. However we were soon recording interesting species as *Aneura pinguis* was spotted near the ghyll stream. Epiphytes were abundant on the trees including *Metgeria furcata*, *M. temperata*, *Radula complanata*, *Ulota crista*, and *Orthotrichum affine*. Surprisingly we never did find *Frullania dilatata*, normally common in such conditions.

By now the leader, and David Streeter were wading in the ghyll, where depth allowed, and it was David who found a small fruiting *Fissidens* growing on sandstone in the middle of the stream. This

was tentatively listed as *Fissidens viridulus sensu lato*, but it was subsequently determined as *Fissidens pusillus*, a very good find for West Kent! *Chiloscyphus polyanthos* was also found on sandstone in the ghyll stream and the banks supported many colonies of *Pellia epiphylla* and *Conocephalum conicum*, together with the expected *Rhynchostegium riparioides*, but not much else.

Back on the bank David now spotted *Homalia trichomanoides* growing over a tree bole in the flood zone, and then the first patch of *Hookeria lucens*. As we carried on southwards we found many more patches of *Hookeria*, some fruiting, showing off the stout black setae and blackish capsules of this splendid moss. Numerous liverworts were found on soil, or growing over the tree boles and rotting wood including *Calypogeia fissa*, *C. arguta*, *C. muelleriana*, and a single patch of *Plagiochila porelloides*.

Having arrived at an area of fallen trees, ideal for sitting on, we stopped for lunch. The weather had remained kind and it was more like spring than mid-January! After lunch we continued along the ghyll stream banks, looking for the last of our target species, *Dichodontium pellucidum*. Unfortunately it was not to be, despite our best efforts. Possibly we had not come far enough along the ghyll, but time was now running out. A broad leaved moss with toothed apex gave some hope, soon dashed as it was obviously a pleurocarp, later identified as just a very bushy form of *Rhynchostegium riparioides*. Small streams were running down the hillside into the main ghyll stream and along one of these the leader spotted *Brachythecium rivulare*. However by now we were just finding the same species over and over so we decided to stop following the ghyll southwards.

Reluctantly we climbed up the ridge away from the ghyll and slowly made our way back towards the car park along a broad footpath. Several rotting

stumps were found and these produced *Tetraphis pellucida* with numerous gemma cups, *Lepidozia reptans*, and *Cephalozia bicuspidata*. A luxuriant patch of *Dicranum* suggested *Dicranum majus* but was in fact just very nice *Dicranum scoparium*. When we reached the arable field just before the parking area we stopped, and looked briefly at the patches of moss on the loose soil. A sample taken

at this time, subsequently turned out to be *Bryum sauteri* when determined microscopically.

It had been a good day out, enjoyed by all, and a total of 62 bryophytes (17 liverworts and 45 mosses), was excellent considering that the ghyll stream was in near flood. My special thanks to David Streeter for his help and assistance.

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Snelsmore Common SSSI, Newbury, Berkshire (v.-c. 22). 14th January 2007.

Snelsmore Common is well known by many bryologists, and several BBS members have recorded there over the years. It was the first site that the Southern Group visited back in November 1991 so this was a welcome return visit for Jeff Bates who had recorded there on that occasion, along with Alan Crundwell and others.

Snelsmore Common is a rich mosaic of diverse habitats from valley mire and lowland wet heath to birch woodland, open dry gravelly heath and remnant ancient woodland. Resident Exmoor ponies and visiting Dexter cattle now graze the site, and monthly work parties do the rest in keeping gorse and birch under control.

There was a conservation work party on the day of our visit, and they were having fried parsnips and jacket potatoes over a fire for lunch. We had been advised food wasn't normally allowed on site because of the ponies; but we had special dispensation to eat our packed lunches, so despite being

tempted to defect to their group for the day, we soldiered on and diligently planned for a covert lunch out of sight of the ponies. They could obviously tell the time though, and appeared from nowhere; pestering us endlessly the minute we sat down to eat.

The valley mires are the obvious attraction of the SSSI and a dozen species of *Sphagnum* have been recorded there over time. We too succumbed to 'the magic of the mire' for part of the day, and found ten: *S. capillifolium*, *S. papillosum*, *S. fallax*, *S. palustre*, *S. fimbriatum*, *S. cuspidatum*, *S. compactum*, *S. magellanicum*, *S. subnitens* and *S. denticulatum*. We didn't find the previously recorded *S. flexuosum* or *S. tenellum*.

Other pleasures of the mires, apart from getting side-tracked into finding the rare fungus *Poro-nia punctata* on wet horse dung (alas it was too fresh for any *Splachnum*) were a few waxy thalli of *Aneura pinguis*, large amounts of *Aulacomnium palustre* and occasional stems of *Calliergon stramineum* amongst the *Sphagnum*. At the smaller end of the scale and with close searching, we uncovered